

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The claims are 2, 5-6 and 8-10. Claim 1 has been canceled in favor of new claim 10 dependent on claim 9 which the Examiner has allowed. Accordingly, claims 2, 5 and 6 which previously depended on claim 1 have been amended to depend on claim 9. In addition, claim 8 has been amended to better define the invention by removing the word "valuable" toward the end of that claim and to correct a reference numeral for the second absorption stage. Reconsideration is expressly requested.

The Examiner indicated that claim 9 is allowed; however, the remaining claims 1-2, 5-6 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Marjanovich et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,820,837* in view of *Khanmamedov U.S. Patent No. 6,506,349* in view of *Sweny et al. U.S. Patent No. 3,877,893*, as evidenced by *Ameen U.S. Patent No. 3,594,985*.

In response, Applicant has canceled claim 1 in favor of new claim 10 dependent on claim 9 and has amended claims 2, 5 and 6

to depend on claim 9. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 9 and claims 2, 5-6 and 10 which depend on claim 9 are now in condition for allowance.

With respect to claim 8, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

As set forth in claim 8 as amended, Applicant's invention provides a method for selective removal of hydrogen sulphides, organic sulphur components and CO₂ from crude gases, in which, *inter alia*, directly downstream of the second absorption stage a flash stage is arranged, in which the absorbing substance coming out from the absorption stage is de-stressed and the released gas, which mainly contains hydrogen sulphide, H₂S and carbon dioxide, CO₂ is guided back into the second absorption stage. Although the Examiner is apparently relying on *Sweny et al.* as disclosing this feature, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's position is unfounded.

In Sweny et al. the second absorption column is merely a repetition of the first absorption column because the purpose of the first absorption column is to pre-absorb mainly disturbing trace components, like BTEX, hydrogen cyanide, etc. while the main absorption is carried out in the consecutive second absorber.

The enriched solvent leaving the bottom of the respective absorption column (first and second) is equally flashed into the belonging flash vessel in each case. The duty of both flash stages is the same. Both flash stages are included in the process for the recovery of useful gas components. Although for the first absorption column the recovered gas is defined as "combustible gas," the recovered gas from the second absorption column is named "product gas." The product gas is defined as a gas containing only 2 ppm of H_2S -- meaning that this gas consists of the feed gas de-riched about the H_2S as well as the other sour gas components. If the feed gas consists of combustible gas plus H_2S , it becomes clear that the product gas is comparable to the combustible components. Thus, both flash

stages in Sweny et al. are used for the same purpose.

In contrast, with Applicant's method as recited in claim 8 as amended, the flash stage downstream of the second absorber (the H₂S enrichment absorber) has a totally different duty. By use of this flash stage, most of the acid gas components dissolved in the enriched solvent coming from the second absorption stage are flashed out of the solvent.

Because the solubility of CO₂ in the solvent is lower than the solubility of H₂S, the solvent leaving the flash stage is enriched in H₂S and de-riched in CO₂ so that a more selective separation between H₂S and CO₂ is achieved. With this flash stage, the separation efficiency of the second (enrichment column) is significantly enhanced, resulting in an enhancement of the selectivity for H₂S over CO₂ in the enriched solvent leaving the second absorber compared to the solvent leaving the attached flash stage by, for example, a factor of 4.

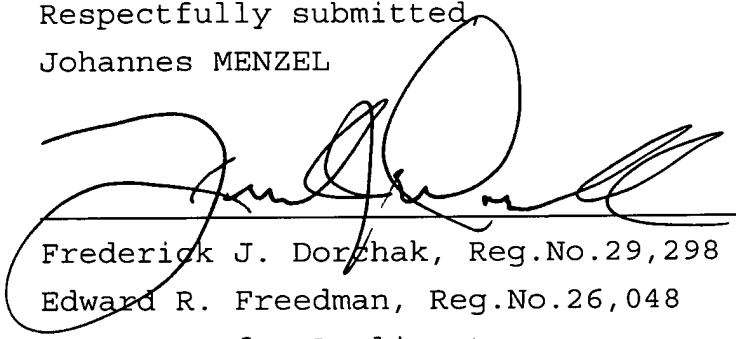
Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the function of the flash stage described in *Sweny et al.* is manifestly different from the function of the flash stage as recited in Applicant's claim 8 as amended and, therefore, cannot be considered to render obvious Applicant's claim 8 as amended whether considered alone or in combination with *Marjanovich et al.*, *Khanmamedov*, or *Ameen*.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 8 is patentable over the cited references, along with claims 9, 2, 5-6 and 10 which are believed to be in condition for allowance.

In summary, claim 1 has been canceled, claims 2, 5, 6 and 8 have been amended, and new claim 10 has been added. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the claims be allowed and that this application be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,
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